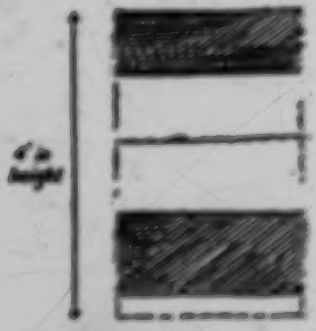
H. Dickson G-6 (1929-47) 1951 . MI I Kuwait
Bedouins MH

Curtain Materials

312.

men goes in for handsome black and white *rugs*, while the poor man practically always confines himself to plain brown or black ones.



These four strips are sewn together and placed round the back and sides of the Badawin tent. The patterns vary slightly, some are without the second white strip. A coarse piece is woven and sewn along the bottom edge. This goes on the ground, and is usually covered with sand to weigh it down. The shade of brown varies according to the wool available.

The weaving of the tent material is largely done by the inhabitants of the towns and villages bordering on the desert, and both in Kuwait and the neighbouring hamlets of Jahrah and the Qusur a good trade is done in this commodity. This does not mean that this work is not largely done in the tribes themselves, but the best qualities and strongest materials for shaikhs' tents probably come from the towns.

Actually every humble tribal woman makes and renews the worn parts of her own tent, and only those with means go into the towns to buy. This was confirmed to me by Rida'a, wife of Shaikh Thuweinee abu Sifri of the Mutair in 1934, and by many other women. The best and most sought after material is made of goats'* hair alone. It is jet black and is thicker than that made from sheep's wool. It also looks better. A good and favourite material is also of goats' hair and sheep's wool mixed. It has a smoky brown and black appearance and is handsome also. A noticeable feature are the tent ropes. They are made very 181 long, on the principle of a ship's anchor, better to take the strain. 312.

* Probably the best are made by the Beni Lam tribe near Amara in Iraq.

A. Dickson G-6 (1929-47) 1951 MI I Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

213 These ropes are attached to the ground by wooden pegs if the ground
342 is firm, but if the soil is sandy the practice is to dig a hole two feet deep, tie the end of the rope round a bundle of *'arfaj* and bury the whole in the earth. An excellent anchor is thus formed, and a rope so treated
342 rarely comes away. When a man first buys a tent, he purchases the poles separately, next the necessary rolls of tent strips of the lengths he requires, then the *gaḍas*, ropes, side poles, etc., and lastly the back curtains.

He then hands the tent strips to his women, who start sewing them together under the experienced eye of one of the older women. Much skill and care is needed to sew up a tent so that it stands straight and does not give way at any of the seams, which are carefully drawn together and sewn with extra-strong all-goats'-hair thread.

After the tent roof has been put together the *sarrija* (plural: *sara'ij*) have to be sewn on from side to side on the underside to support the poles and take the strain of the ropes. These are extra-strong white-and-black patterned strips 6 inches in width (like the Indian *sawar*). Immediately over the spot where the roof bears on the tent poles, two strips of wood are sewn into the tent roof, each 1½ feet long, so as to prevent the tops of the poles tearing open the roof. Each wooden strip is called a *gaḍa*. These wooden strips are not evident to the naked eye as they are rolled sausage fashion into the tent roof where the centre strips join. Each pole is placed exactly under the centre of the wood, and when in position does not damage the tent cloth. In the north proper holes are made for the tops of the poles in the tent ceiling, but not so among the tribes of Hasa and Nejd.

Lastly the *ribbak* (plural: *arbāl*) or semicircular wood fasteners have to be sewn on to the ends of the *sarrija* on which the ropes are fastened to the tent sides. This is a very important operation, as there must be no weakness here. The ropes (always thick hempen ones) are now tied to the tent and everything is ready for pitching.

342 The pitching process is always done by the women, assisted by
462 servants and slaves, occasionally also by a young son. It is supposed to be the women's particular job in life. The head of the family (*rai al bait*) directs the operation, and it is surprising to see how every person has a particular task allotted to him or her, knows it and sticks to it at every tent-pitching. The daughters of the house, for instance,

J. Dickson G-8 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Women's Quarters

Chap. IV

Last of all be places in position the *shar finjān* (brass case for coffee cups) alongside the *yad wal hāwen* (brass pestle and mortar), the *mahamrad* (wooden slipper for cooling coffee beans), the *mukhbāt* (wooden peg for stirring the hot coffee), the *lifa* (coir piece to stuff into the coffee-pot's spout), and finally the *mukhbāt* (incense burner). All is now ready to receive a guest, except that the actual coffee beans, the cardamum seed to mix with the coffee, the firewood (*'arfaj* bush) and the *jalla* camel manure (in place of coal) and the drinking water, is round in the women's part of the tent or outside it, and will have to be fetched.

As a guest is seen arriving these last necessities are brought and by the time he sits down, firewood, *jalla*, etc., all are ready to hand.

The scheme of things in a poor Badawin tent is the same, only everything is on a very much more modest scale—in fact, according to his purse.

A man leaning on the guest saddle is said to be *murtaki*; if he leans his back against a cushion (*mursad*), he is said to be *murassad*. If he tells a story he sits cross-legged; when eating he kneels on his left knee and sits on his left heel; his eating hand works outside his right upright knee; when he washes his hands he squats with knees wide apart.

WOMEN'S PORTION OF THE TENT

Women and servants (if any) carry all cooking utensils, etc., into the women's apartment and cooking portion of the tent, the heavy baggage and bags containing rice, flour, dates, salt, sugar are stored up against the *ghita* curtain dividing the women's from the men's apartments. The camel saddle-bags are then hung up on the tent poles, as well as other odds and ends, including the owner's spare rifle and ammunition. Red *kalafs* or quilts, which take the place of blankets, are then rolled up and placed on top of the stores, and the woman of the house and her daughter's decorated *mukaws* (litters) are placed in a prominent position on the other side of the tent, so as to be seen by passers by.

Not the least important of the women's treasures are the spindles (*mughzal*), with which the womenfolk in their spare time spin camels' or sheep's wool. These they are for ever whirling, whether on the

L. Dickson G-5 (1953-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins 1634

• 283 march or on camel back; indeed, the *mughyal* would seem to be almost part of the *Badawiyat*. The method of spinning is as follows:

The spinner keeps the wool she is spinning under her right arm, or in her bosom, while with her left hand she prepares the wool to be spun some two feet in length, ties it to the lower end of the spindle pole, and throws it under the hook fixed to the top of the spindle head. Next she raises her left knee (she is sitting at the time) and, placing the lower end of the spindle pole on it, she sharply twists the spindle handle on her knee with an outward move of the palm of her hand. This causes it to spin sharply. Next moment she holds the spinning spindle aloft in her right hand by means of the wool. When this latter has got a sufficient twist on it, she winds the completed wool round the under-
286 side of the spindle head. The other most important article of the women's quarters in the hand loom (*nasra*) on which all the cloth parts of the tent are woven or replaced. Mother or daughter keeps the loom in constant action: they are never idle, these desert women. Treasures
415 such as money, coffee beans, cardamom, sugar, salt, silks and special holiday attire are kept by the housewife locked up in a small tin or wooden box. The key of this she always keeps on her person, and tied to a portion of her head veil or *milfa*. This key is one of the first things that catch the European's eye when talking to a Badawin woman.

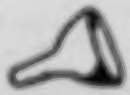
Close to, but outside the women's quarters, and away from the guest compartment, lie the filled water-skins (*gurab*), which for coolness' sake are always placed on a thick mattress of *'erfej* bush. Near these are kept:

(*a*) The small leather bucket and rope (*dalla*) for drawing water out of wells, with or without the cross-piece of wood in the centre to keep it open, and

(*b*) The large leather bucket or bath (*kaudi*) standing on its curved wooden legs, from which camels and sheep drink. Both *dalla* and *kaudi* are usually bought by the owner of the tent when he comes up to Kuwait or other town to do *mushtiri*; in the same way he buys his goat water-skins which have to be renewed fairly frequently.

(*c*) The still larger camel water-skin or *rdwi* for conveying water from wells that may be distant.

Last, but not least, the *mijrishat* (or *mijrish*) with goatskin hanging



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